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ASPECTS OF THE GROWTH AND STRUCTURE OF PRE-COLONIAL

AFRICAN TOWNS: THE CASE OF KANO, NORTHERN NIGERIA *

by

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If we consider that this industry /Kano textile manufacturing/ is not carried on here as in Europe, in immense establishments degrading man to the meanest conditions of life, but that it gives employment and support to families without compelling them to sacrifice their domestic habits, we must presume that Kano ought to be one of the happiest countries in the world; and so it is so long as its governor, too often lazy and indolent, is able to defend its inhabitants from the cupidity of their neighbours, which of course is stimulated by the very wealth of this country.

(Barth, H. 1857. Quoted from Davidson, B. 1959: 124).

Although the above quotation echoes the idyllic sentiments of a mid-nineteenth century European scholar and traveller - as set against his knowledge of the squalor and social ills of the unfolding capitalist industrialisation of British towns - his description of Kano's industrial activity captures some of the intrinsic characteristics of pre-colonial African urbanisation which is often inadequately treated in standard texts and syllabi of both our high school and undergraduate geography courses. That such a significant component of the African past receives little attention in our geography curriculum partly reflects the need to decolonize human geography and perhaps, more fundamentally, our inability to appreciate fully the nature and intensity of the penetration and articulation of colonial capitalism in the creation of present urbanisation processes, spatial forms and patterns of settlements in Africa. It is perhaps no wonder that our geography curricula are dominated by the teaching of theories and concepts derived from historical specifications and contexts which are demonstrably irrelevant to our concrete experiences.

The present effort is an attempt to reconstruct some aspects of the geography of pre-colonial towns. This presents a difficult terrain for the ordinary geographer as it involves the evaluation of material from somewhat unfamiliar sources and also since this material is often incomplete or inaccurate (Davidson, 1959: x). The choice of Kano was mainly influenced

* The western Sudan, as used in this article, refers to an environmental zone of dry savanna found in the interior of West Africa and not to the country currently called the Sudan - Editor.

by the relative availability of accessible material at the time of writing although it is hoped that the ensuing discussion will generate debate as well as similar reconstruction of the pre-colonial geography of southern Africa. It is also important to begin countering notions that urbanisation in Africa was a product of European, Indian or Arab occupation - and indeed that examples of 'medieval' urban forms are absent in Africa.

ANTECEDENTS TO THE GROWTH OF KANO

The long period of insecurity following the fall of the Roman Empire saw the gradual gathering of momentum in trade centred around Mediterranean ports but linked to North Africa and through the Red Sea with India and East Africa. This revival in trade and commerce led to the booming and flourishing of ports like Genoa, Venice, Marseilles, Naples, Castilles, Tripoli and Tunis on the Mediterranean coast but also stimulated hinterland urban settlements at the source or along the routes of the merchandise upon which the trade depended. Western and Eastern Africa, although later participants of this international trade of the late Medieval Ages had this trade as an important *raison d'être* for the rise of large settlements in the areas.

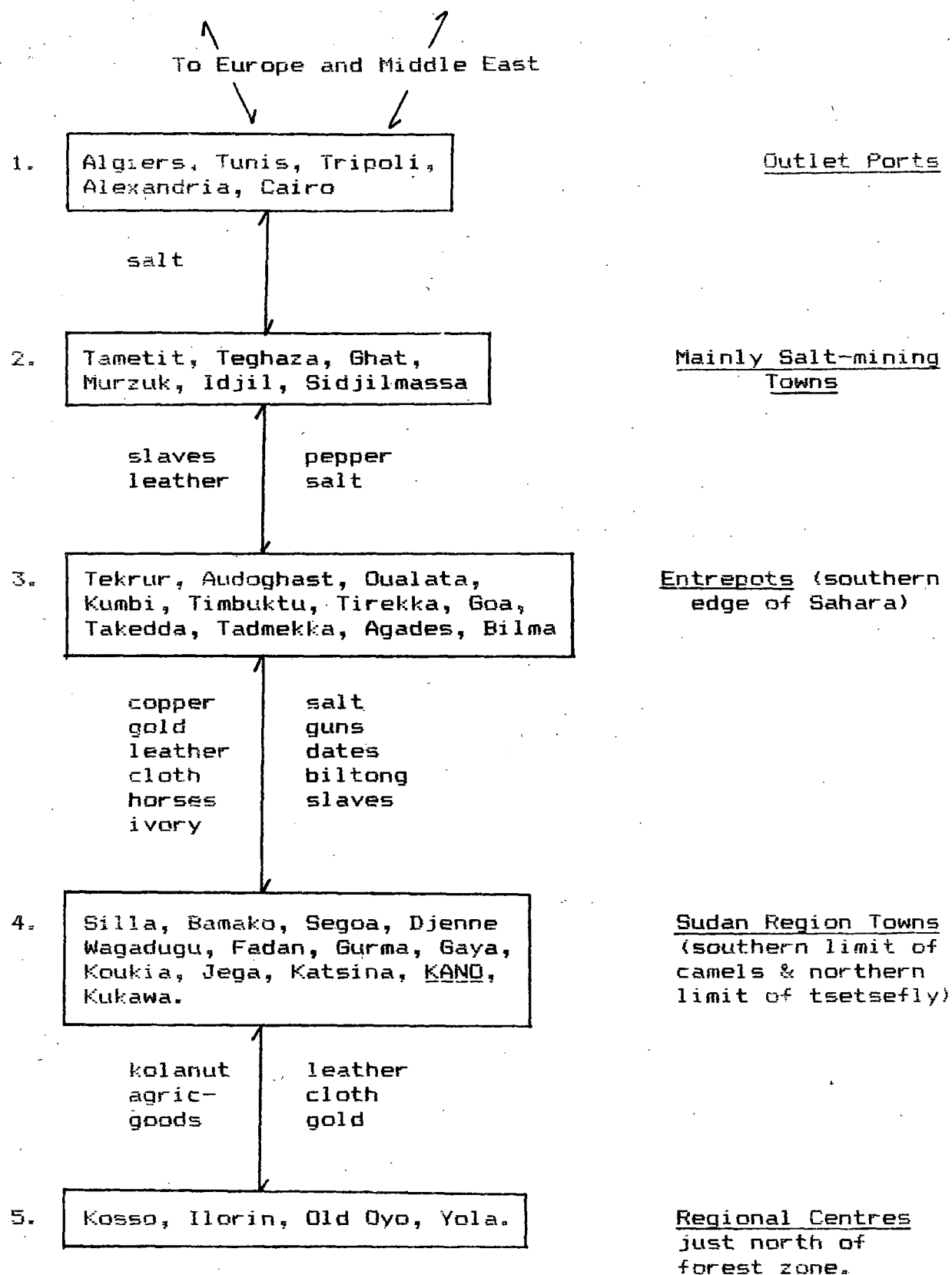
Located in the middle of the western Sudan region on the northern edge of the Guinea savanna of West Africa, Kano's origins have been 'guesstimated' to around the seventh Century A.D. (Bello, 1978; Lubeck, 1977); though it would appear that it was not until after the 11th century that it became a dominant town in the region. However, by the 15th century, partly owing to the introduction of the camel, Kano had assumed an important role in the trans-Saharan trade route (Davidson, 1959: 23). The trans-Saharan trade was linked through a spatial hierarchy of regional marketing towns starting from the forest zones of the west African coast up to the Mediterranean ports of North Africa - the latter forming the highest tier of this hierarchy as outlets of the African subcontinent's contribution to this trade. (See Figure 1).

However, although the trans-Saharan trade was important in the growth of towns along its route, especially Kano which grew progressively from the 14th century almost oblivious of the constant political conflicts and wars which marked the rise and fall of the succession of empires of the western Sudan, other factors within and around the subregion also had important influence on its growth and prosperity. It is suggested here that the interaction of historical, economic, socio-political and ecological factors provided the basis of Kano's growth and stability as well as shaping its urban form while its counterparts like Timbuktu and Kumbi declined and disappeared respectively over time.

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE WESTERN SUDAN

The Kano city-state was situated in the centre of the western Sudan wherein emerged several highly developed politically centralised kingdoms of very ancient origins. The

Figure 1: Inter-regional Hierarchy of Marketing Towns in the Trans-Sahara Trading Route.



Derived from Mabogunje, 1968: 46-48.

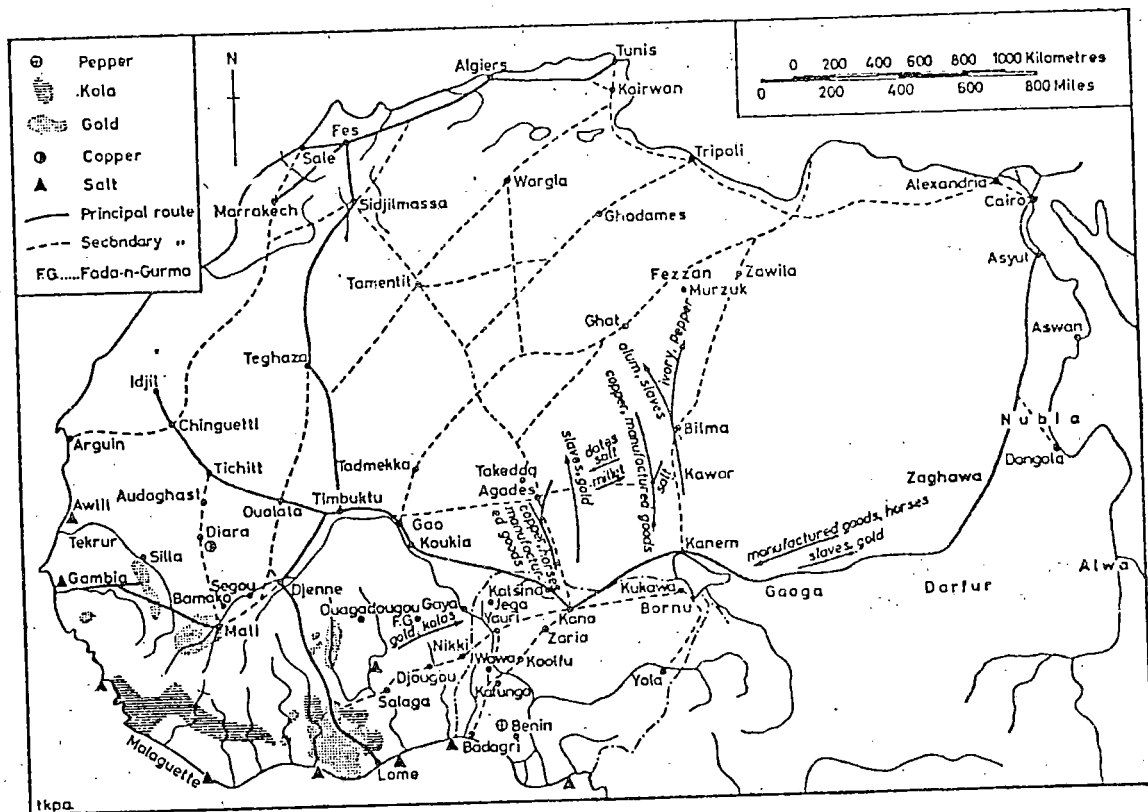
earliest of these ancient kingdoms to emerge was Ghana which was already centralised by 800 A.D.; followed by Mali which rose in the 13th century until the 16th century; and lastly the Songhai kingdom whose power and prestige covered the fifteen and sixteenth centuries. The Songhai Empire extended over the Hausa states, of which Kano was one, and achieved a measure of centralised control unparalleled in the history of the western Sudan. Political stability and security associated with this period gave rise to a height of increased trade and commerce. These three western Sudan empires were Islamised and trade contacts with the Arab world opened. However, in 1591 a Moroccan invasion completely destroyed the Songhai kingdom and left the Hausa states to chart their own course after 1600. This invasion upset the role of the Hausa states in the trans-Saharan trade to some extent. Some historians assert that despite the series of political conflicts in the region, peaceful trading continued and cities and towns in general continued to flourish and survive the changing fortunes of successive empires mainly because of the 'need to control international trade and to provide the 'pax' necessary to this trade to thrive' (Mabogunje, 1968: 49; Davidson, 1959).

Besides the influence of these early kingdoms on the emergence of the Hausa city states, closer trading links were also forged with the Kanem-Bornu Empire to the east which, by the mid-15th century, was powerful enough to attract tribute from the Kano city-state. However, partly as a result of its large size, the Kanem-Bornu empire split up in the 14th century resulting in the emergence of the powerful Bornu Empire of the south-west of Lake Chad. This latter empire's strong trade connections with the Hausa city states exerted a lasting Islamic influence on the architecture and spatial organisation of these towns until its decline a few decades after the decline of the Songhai kingdom.

Hausaland itself underwent a series of changes as a result of these contacts and emerged by the 16th century with a cultural homogeneity in all the 'pure' Hausa states of Kano, Zaria, Gobir, Katsina, Rano, Biram and Daura. It may appear that these city-states were closely bound in some political alliance and yet numerous conflicts arose and several wars were fought especially between Kano and Katsina who competed for trade. The inter-regional wars between Hausaland and surrounding empires failed to totally disrupt the trade flows feeding into the trans-Saharan trade, and only marginally affected trade so that the major trading towns remained intact. However, those towns dependent on lower order regional and local trade were significantly disrupted.

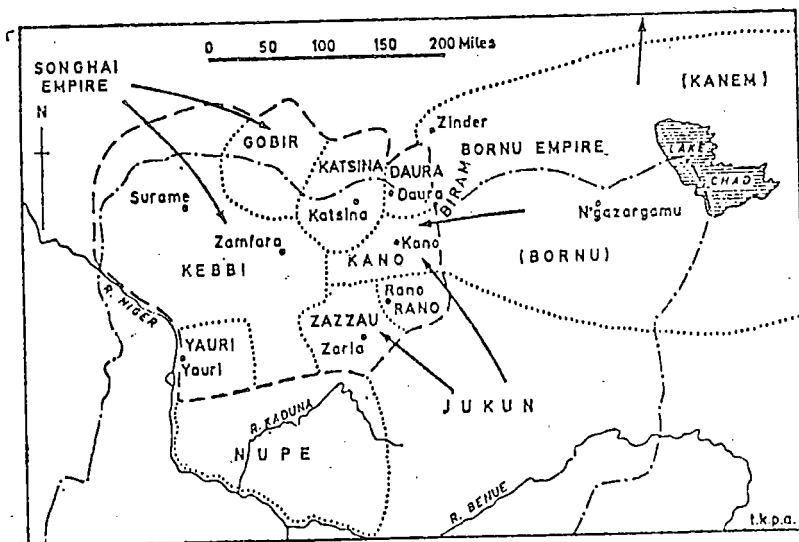
There also existed some functional specialisation in Hausaland relating to growth and security of the region. Gobir served as the northern outpost guarding against attacks from the nomadic Tuareg; Zaria was the procurer of slaves; Kano and Katsina were the trading towns; Rano was the industrial state with iron smelting and working, cloth manufacturing and dyeing; while Daura was the spiritual centre (Anderson, 1977). The Hausa city-states thus formed a spatially integrated economic and religio-political unit with Kano as the major marketing centre exporting leather, shoes, handicraft goods and slaves to

The Western Sudan : Trade routes in the 16th Century.



(Source : Mabogunje, 1968 : 48)

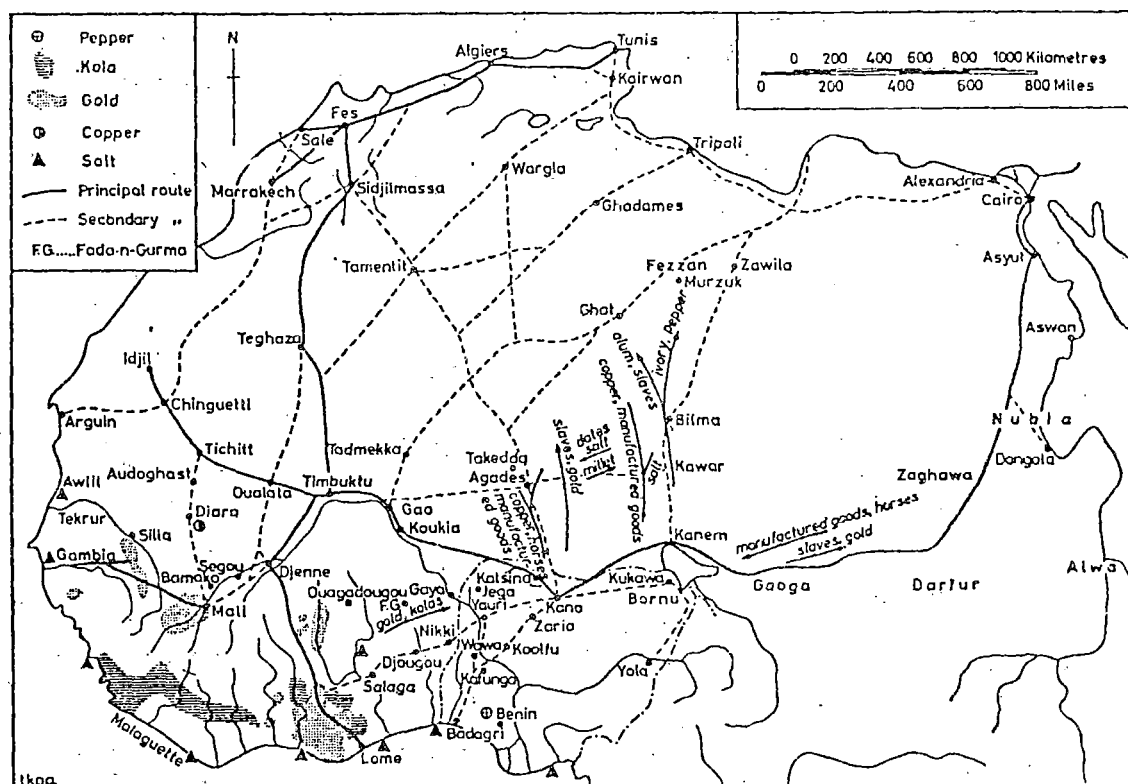
Hausa City States and their neighbours in the 16th - 19th Centuries.



(Source : Mabogunje, 1968 : 51)

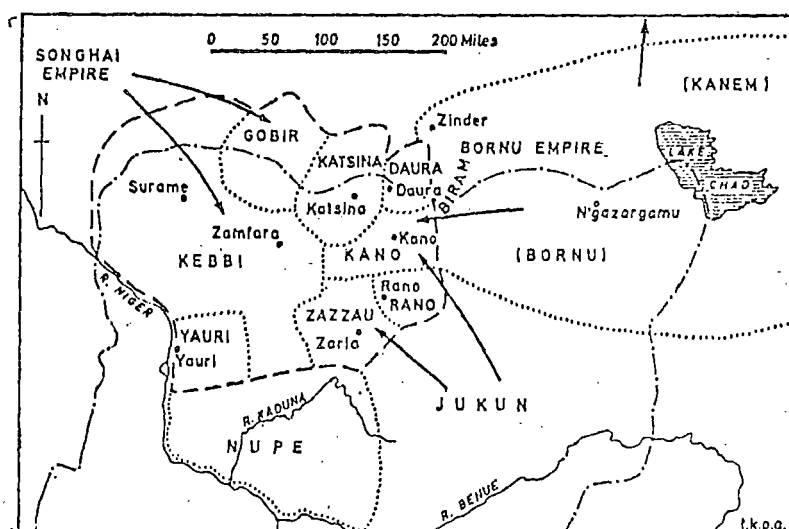
Figure 2

The Western Sudan : Trade routes in the 16th Century.



(Source : Mabogunje, 1968 : 48)

Hausa City States and their neighbours in the 16th - 19th Centuries.



(Source : Mabogunje, 1968 : 51)

Figure 2

Table 1: Imports of Kano, 1851

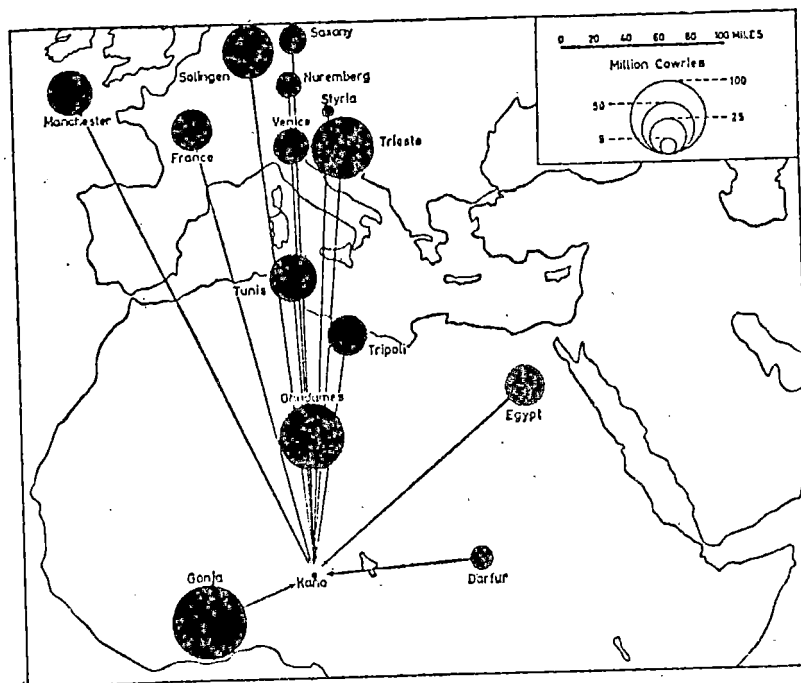
	Money value (in million cowries)	Sources	Remarks
1. Calicos	40	Manchester	Part dyed and re-exported to Ghadames
2. Muslins	40	Manchester	-
3. Course Silk	70	Tripoli	Used for ornamentating robes, sandals, etc
4. Woollen Cloth (red and green)	15	Saxony	Going out of fashion
5. Beads	50	Venice and Trieste	Low price, reduced supply
6. Sugar	12	France	In small loaves of 2,5lbs each
7. Common Paper	5	Nuremburg	Used for wrapping
8. Needles and Looking-glasses	8	Nuremburg	Cheap
9. Sword-Blades	50	Solingen	Re-exported after blades are set
10. Common Razors	2-3	Styria	Cheap
11. French Silks	20	France	Re-exported to Yorubaland and Gonja
12. Articles of Arab Dress	50	Tunis and Egypt	-
13. White Shawls	10	Egypt	-
14. Frankincense and Spices	15	-	-
15. Rose Oil	40	-	Expensive, mainly for upper class
16. Tin, etc.	10	-	-
17. Copper and Zinc	15-20	Tripoli and Darfur	

Continued over ..

	Money value (in million cowries)	Source	Remarks
18. Silver	small amount		Silversmiths quite active
19. Gold	small amount		General standard mithkal = 4 000 Kundi
TOTAL approx. 488 million cowries			

(Source: Mabogunje, 1968: 58)

Sources of imports into Kano in the 19th Century.



(Source : Mabogunje, 1968 : 57)

Figure 3

other states and for the trans-Sahara merchants (Mabogunje, 1968).

It has been suggested that the political 'neutrality' of the Hausa city-states which prevented them from exerting an aggressive expansionist policy towards the neighbouring empires was responsible for the stability of the commercial activities of the trading towns and in particular, Kano which was raided several times. During these raids, Kano fought back and whenever she failed to hold back the enemy, accepted her victors by accommodating them politically so that partly as a result of her economic significance in the region, she was usually spared destruction (McDonnell, 1964).

THE KANO CITY-STATE

Besides the regional and interregional levels of economic interaction articulated by the Kano city-state, perhaps Kano's economic stability has its roots in the nature of, and relations with its hinterland. The Dalla Hill on which old Kano city was founded is known to have had iron mining and workings since the seventh century. In addition to iron smithing, the Kano area was famous for its textile and leather goods production. Leather and dyed cloth found markets as far afield as Europe during the 13th century. Dr. Heinrich Barth in 1851 recorded Kano City's economic strength as follows:

The great advantage of Kano is that commerce and manufacturers of textiles, clothing and textile products go hand in hand and almost every family has a share in them. There is really something grand in this kind of industry which spreads to the north as far as Murzuk, Ghat and even Tripoli; to the west, not only to Timbuktu but ... as far as the shores of the Atlantic ...

As for the supply sent to Timbuktu, this is often overlooked in Europe when people continuously speak of fine cloth produced in that town /Timbuktu/, while in truth all apparel of decent character in Timbuktu is bought from Kano ... and we must remember that the province is one of the most fertile spots on earth and is able to produce not only the supply of corn necessary for its population, but also export, and that it possesses, besides, the finest pasturelands. (Barth, 1965; 2: 126).

The Kano area is still the 'granary' of Nigeria and its hinterland, which has come to be popularly called the 'Kano Close-Settled Zone' (KCSZ) (Mortimer and Wilson, 1965), comes close to the Nile Valley as the most productive and efficient traditional agricultural system in Africa. Kano's location within an ecological zone of such potential as well as its association with highly organised and stable political systems seem to be the main factors underlying its ability to develop into a stable and self-sustaining commercial centre. What literature reveals is a well integrated space economy at both regional and local levels to the extent that it may be tempting for some geographers to evaluate the 'spatial efficiency' of

such an economic landscape along Christalleian-type central place concepts.

Islamic traders and scholars based in Kano since the 15th century extended Moslem influence over Kano's rulers so that by the beginning of the nineteenth century, Islamic wars (jihad) which were fought among the Hausa city-states firmly consolidated a strict Muslim empire in Hausaland with Kano as its economic centre (Lubeck, 1977: 282). The aristocratic Fulani rulers who became the ruling class in Kano (sarakuna) ushered in the contemporary social structure where the Hausa (talalawa) became engaged in commerce, farming and crafts. With inter-marriage between the Fulani and 'Hausa' a homogenous Islamic nation commonly referred to as the Hausa emerged.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, European trading activities in the North and West African coasts modified the conditions under which the trans-Saharan trade operated, particularly the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the demand for new raw materials required by the newly industrializing Europe. This shift in direction and content of trade in the subcontinent led to the decline of towns like Timbuktu and Bilma and yet Kano, probably owing to her broad-based local economy, was barely affected by these changes. With the formal British colonisation of Northern Nigeria in 1903 Kano's trading and economic functions were re-oriented southwards through its link by rail to Lagos in 1912. The previous flourishing trade of the past centuries was gradually substituted by cash oriented agriculture and modern industry under British military overlordship. The twentieth century thus saw the growth of Kano City's structure in line with the needs of the new political economy and social order so that today, the city exhibits two distinct urban forms resulting from the articulation of different modes of production.

DETERMINANTS OF KANO'S URBAN FORM AND STRUCTURE

Literature suggests that a gradual growth of Kano from around the 10th century was closely associated with its trading activities although no accurate figures are available to indicate the rates and pattern of its development. It appears, however, that by the end of the 11th century, it had attained some significant size within the then context of urbanisation in the western Sudan. Furthermore, the continuous in- and out-migration of traders, merchants, farmers and slaves, together with the seasonal migration cycles of the rural population resulted in substantial short-term fluctuations in the town's population. In 1851 Barth observed that Kano's urban population doubled during the dry season (October through to April) as a result of traders from rural markets and rural based craftsmen and farmers moving into the town (1965). This probably explains why estimates of the population of Kano given by Denham in 1824 (30 000 to 40 000) and by Barth in 1851 (30 000) seem rather contradictory (Mabogunje, 1968). In 1917 an early colonial census put the town's population of the second largest town of Katsina with 16 513 people (Lubeck, 1977), while the rural population density within thirty miles of Kano (part of the KCSZ) was as high as 350 persons per square mile.

Another indicator of the town's growth was evidence of the outward expansion of the city walls which occurred at least three times in the history of the settlement. In his visit to Kano in 1851, Barth noted:

We have indeed, no means of describing the way in which the town gradually increased to its present size this much is however evident that the town never filled the increased space occupied within the walls; though it is envious to observe that there are evident traces of a more ancient wall on the south side, ... which did not describe such a wide circumference, particularly towards the south-east, where the great projecting angle seems to have been added in later years for merely strategic purposes. (Barth, 1965: 506).

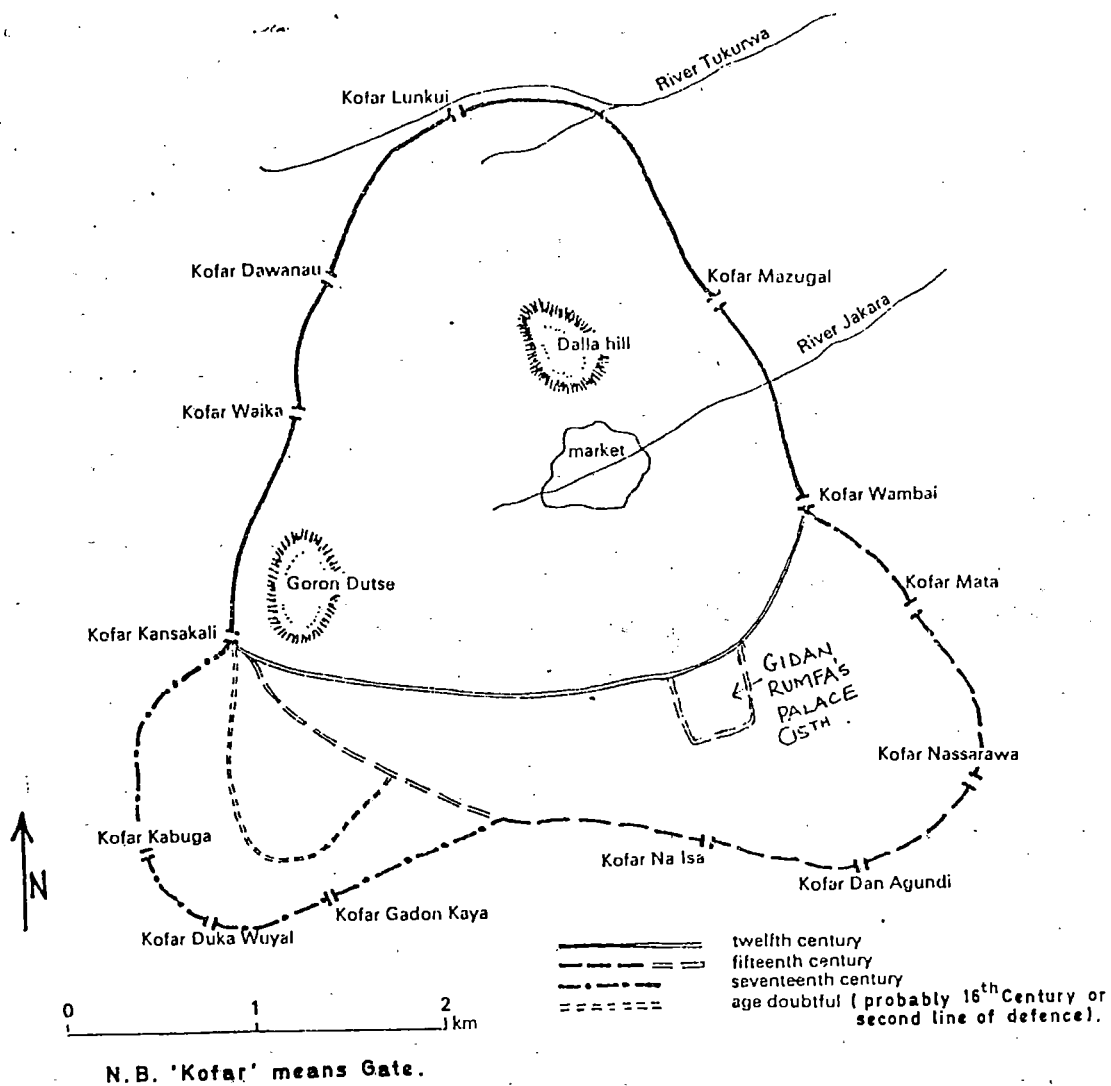
Just as the economic and political developments in the western Sudan shaped the spatial patterns of regional and inter-regional interaction and urban development, the urban form of Kano city was in turn influenced by similar socio-political, religious and economic forces and conditions. Essentially, the city's development, like that of other medieval towns, resulted from a process commonly referred to as 'organic growth' (Mumford, 1961). Although the process of organic growth conjures notions of confused, inefficient and irregular development, it basically reflects a form of community-based system of land-use regulation resulting from a continuous response to changing demographic, socio-political and economic arrangements. The ensuing spatial forms reflect the changing trajectory of values and priorities of the society or the major actors in it.

SITE AND SITUATION

The original siting of Kano on Dalla Hill overlooking Goron Dutse Hille in the south west was mainly a response to the defense imperative of the then war-torn western Sudan region as was the walling of the town to reinforce security. The actual built-up area was confined to the south western side leaving the rest of the area to the east for agricultural uses. This vacant area was also used to accommodate outlying farmers who moved inside the walls to enable the town to produce enough food in times of siege (Anderson, 1977; Barth, 1965). Along the city walls were located several gates (kofars) which by 1904 totalled thirteen. The walls varied in strength, size and height (Moody, 1967) but generally ranged from 9 to 15 metres high, 12 metres thick at the base tapering to 1.25 metres at the top. At the top, the walls had a buttressed parapet interspaced with loopholes wherein armed guards were placed. Surrounding the wall was a deep dry moat.

Moody (1967) identified three wall-building periods in the history of Kano. The outward expansion of the walls over time suggests south westerly direction of the city's growth. Anderson (1977), has also suggested that the south western side of the city's fortification was more solid and stronger - a deliberate measure to thwart threats and attacks from Katsina,

Plan of Kano City Walls around 1903.



(Source : Moody 1967 :21 and Andersen,1977:176)

Figure 4

Kano's main competitor. These walls also proved impenetrable during the British invasions of 1903.

MAIN ELEMENTS OF LAND-USE IN KANO

The main gates leading into the city were oriented towards the major trading routes of the city. These heavily defended gates acted as customs posts and immigration control points where tolls on incoming goods were levied to provide revenue for the city and also serving as points for screening immigrants (Mabogunje, 1968: 62). Lubeck (1977) also mentions the existence of an elaborate taxation system administered by 'a patrimonial and literate bureaucracy' which even embraced taxation of land suitable for dry season irrigation by its assessed productivity even if the owners/lessees failed to farm that particular parcel of land. These and other tax measures which protected the textile industry from taxation represent a sophisticated pre-colonial fiscal policy designed to boost the wealth and economic development of the city state. In the central market there also existed a system of renting stalls to traders to generate revenue for the town treasury.

The Central Market:

From the gates, wide avenues led to the Central Market located just south of Dalla Hill. Trading activities however started right at the gate all the way along these wide routes up to the market thus making them major radial commercial streets and specialised wholesale marts of goods originating from particular directions of the city's hinterland (McDonell, 1964). Apart from their trading functions, these wide avenues also allowed for free movement of laden beasts, political processions, religious festivals and easy passage of troops (Anderson, 1977). Leading from these main arteries were lower order roads to two other main activity centres of the city - the Emir's Palace and the central mosque.

The Central Mosque:

This is a prominent building in the town partly because of its elaborate architectural style and also because it formed a rallying point for the town's largely Islamic population. The mosque also served as a centre for disseminating education and literary skills, the latter being an essential aid to efficient trading.

The Emir's Palace:

Unlike the mosque, the palace was not merely a building but a 'town' on its own right as it housed the royal family and its servants as well as being the seat of government. In 1851, Barth (1965) estimated the Emir's palace in Kano to occupy about 13 hectares and surrounded by a wall 9 metres high. The palace also contained a smaller mosque and dwelling quarters for the Emir's guards, slaves and members of the royal family. The residential quarters were composed of a series of 2-4 stories of mud structures containing separate courtyards and interconnected by narrow and intricate alleys. The same layout characterised the Emir's Quarters as indeed other residential

areas in the town except that the former was larger and had more grandeur in its architectural style.

These three elements - the market, mosque and palace - occupied central positions in Hausa towns thus emphasising the economic, socio-religious and political/administrative structure of the region's urbanisation. At a smaller scale these elements were replicated in the different areas of the city and thereby providing a framework around which the residential structure was organised. Apart from the residential neighbourhoods which were commonly referred to as 'quarters', no other specialised land use categories were found in the city since in general, work-places and residences were spatially 'coincidental' (Mabogunje, 1968). The major exception to this was the location of dyepits, potteries and smitheries which, owing to their need for larger sites and their polluting effects, tending to be sited away from the residential areas. Textiles and crafts were however worked from places of residence. Farms and cemeteries were limited to the unbuilt areas within the city walls.

The Residential Structure:

Residentially, the town was arranged around several 'quarters' which focussed on the residence of the head of the quarter - the latter forming an administrative sub-nucleus. Although the city had a dominant Islamic culture, it attracted a heterogeneous set of inhabitants so that there existed residential segregation along ethnic and occupational lines. For instance, Arab merchants occupied their own quarter on the south-east of Dalla Hill, an area which attained a luxurious lifestyle; and craftsmen were organised into guilds with the guild workers in a particular trade living in a distinct occupationally defined quarter (Lubeck, 1977). The guild master became the head of the quarter and automatically was the local representative of that quarter at the Emir's palace.

The residential landuse component normally occupied the single largest area with the city walls and spread southwards as the population grew. The quarter consisted of clusters of adobe buildings which were clustered around narrow lanes or cul-de-sacs. The overall effect of these labyrinths of alleys surrounded by storeyed mud structures gave an impression of an unplanned settlement. Such is the nature of 'organic planning' which was aptly defined by Mumford as a process which "... does not begin with a pre-conceived goal; it moves from need to need ..., in a series of adaptations which themselves become increasingly coherent and purposeful that they generate a complex final design, hardly less unified than a pre-formed geometric pattern" (1961: 302). The resultant form reflects intrinsic social values like privacy in Islamic society, limited access, defense, security and climatic adaptation. Anderson reinforces this point:

Inside these /Hausa/ towns, the disordered arrangement of the houses seems to have been a definite defense ploy: a visitor would soon lose his way and unwelcome ones could easily be trapped ... Tortuous planning seems to have been deliberate ... /and/

although the main streets were broad, all others were studiously arranged to admit only one cow /camel or horse/ in single file in between stockades surrounding each household, in order to foil any enemies who managed to enter the town. In Kano, the twisting narrow streets have been interpreted as ensuring Muslim privacy, but they could equally well have served to confuse any unwelcome aliens. (1977: 72).

The quarter consisted of groups of extended family compound units representing either an occupational guild community or in some cases embodied a clan or closely-knit community with a common rural origin. The size of the quarter in terms of population is not clear from literature but since Barth (1965) listed 74 quarters for Kano in 1851 and an estimated population of 30 000, simple arithmetic would put the average size of a quarter to between 400-500 people. The southward expansion of residential areas following the extension of the city walls was accompanied by the growth and subdivision of the family compound as a household matured to several new nuclear families resulting in the overall increase in population. This process of compound subdivision (i.e. the creation of more and smaller household units in former larger lots) was also observed in Ibadan by Mabogunje (1968: 226) who called it "growth by fission" which results in an increase in density, both in population and the number of dwelling units within the quarter.

The British conquest of Hausaland at the beginning of this century and its annexation to southern Nigeria ushered in a new phase in the growth of Kano city whereby its economy was reoriented southwards and transformed to meet the needs of a colonial political economy. Post-1903 Kano city saw a rapid increase in population. This was a result of accelerated migration to the city consequent upon the development of export oriented agriculture which displaced some peasant farmers within the province. Also, the colonial policy of recruiting literate southern Nigerians to the north to take up clerical jobs in the colonial bureaucracy as well as in the budding industrial and commercial activities led to an increase in the overall population and the diversification of the cultural and ethnic heterogeneity of the city. These and other developments represent what may be seen as Kano's formal incorporation into the unfolding global capitalist system as a peripheral subcore.

From a population of 59 670 in 1917 (Lubeck, 1977) Kano's population rose to over one hundred thousand in the 1940s; 127 205 by the 1952 census, and well over 250 000 at independence in 1960 (Mabogunje, 1968). The controversial 1972 census put the city's population to well over one million people. This rapid population led to the 'overspilling' of the 'modern city' to the east of the 'old' walled city and the emergence of new residential land use patterns characterised by rigid ethnic, racial and class segregation typical of colonial cities elsewhere.

As the second largest industrial centre in Nigeria the most striking feature of Kano's industrial structure is the minor role played by transnational corporate capital in manufacturing, in sharp contrast to industrial development in Lagos.

The majority of industries here are owned and managed by Hausa entrepreneurs who traded initially in export commodities like groundnuts leather but gradually made the transition from commerce to light manufacturing so that industrial development is concentrated in processing of agricultural raw materials, textiles using imported yarns and various import substitution industries whose products are consumed in northern Nigeria (Lubeck, 1975). Partly as a response to this industrial development, Kano's hinterland has developed an intensive agricultural base with the help of government efforts - particularly the introduction of irrigation systems. Such developments are seen by some as leading to a transformation of the whole settlement structure of Kano and its environs through the creation of 'proletarianized villages' (Lubeck, 1977).

CONCLUSION

The present structure of Kano city presents a juxtaposition of two contrasting urban forms belonging to different historical periods which are characterised by distinct socio-economic circumstances and political arrangements. It seems that any attempt to understand the contemporary spatial structure of Kano city should go beyond mere description to analyse the processes by which such urban forms were constructed. Recent approaches in urban research have become increasingly critical of the preoccupation with application of static typologies of urban forms and now pay more attention to dynamic theories of urban development. Furthermore, 'modernisation' and 'dependency' views of urban development seem to have been overstated and overly deterministic (Simon, 1984).

In the case of Kano, Lubeck (1975: 141; 1977) has put forward a persuasive argument that contrary to dependency theorists who assert that cities of the Third World have assumed dependent characteristics and patterns of urbanisation as a result of their integration into global capitalism, Kano city has substantially resisted such a dependent character and relationship. This, he argues, is because of Kano's strong economic base, its bureaucratic state, the complex social influences of Islam and its feudal past. Consequently most industrial development in Kano is owned and operated by aristocratic Hausa families who had accumulated their wealth throughout history from various forms of trade.

However there are evident signs of dependent urban forms in Kano, particularly in the Modern City where urban space construction reproduced contemporary patterns of class relations and dominance in the residential structure. New industrial estates are now located near working class wards; and Kano's economic base has been drastically transformed from a largely agricultural marketing and crafts to export crop oriented and manufacturing in direct response to needs of capitalist production. Although it is true that Kano's strong Islamic ideology and complex feudal foundations are still reflected in the distinct urban forms of the old city, this is not necessarily an indication of resilience. After all the 'feudal' mode of production here is now largely subordinated to an 'informal sector'. It could be argued that the importance of the 'Old City' today lies on its touristic value or function

and from various forms of capitalist enterprises with Islam providing the legitimizing ideology.

It is true that dependency theory does not provide powerful enough conceptual tools to explain the nature of urbanization processes in Third World cities so that persisting residual or relict urban forms found in some towns could be more accurately understood by analysing the nature and extent by which capitalism 'articulates' with existing mode(s) of production to produce peculiar urban forms. It seems that such an approach could throw more light on how colonial capitalism managed to destroy, coexist or was itself moulded by 'traditional' modes of production to create new, hybrid or retain existing urban forms.

It seems that the description of aspects of Kano's changing urban forms which this paper has attempted also requires a conceptual approach if we are to fully understand the structure of precolonial cities. The apparent contrast in the urban forms of different regions could then be concretely analysed against the manner in which specific economies were transformed.

It seems that the geographical study of African urbanisation could benefit from approaches which explore the relation of socio-spatial forms to the political economy within the wider historical context of colonial capitalism. Our concern with spatial forms and morphology needs to be accompanied by an equally sensitive social geography of the colonial and post-colonial city.

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